

Call Made to Extend Mass Transit in Atlanta

Ariel Hart/The Atlanta Journal-Constitution/11-7-08

GEORGIA - Atlanta has missed the boat on public transportation compared with some other cities, said the president of a national mass transit organization. Now that more people are driving less, the consequences could be grave.

"You'll get left in the dust," said William Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association, an advocacy group of mass transit companies and government agencies.

Millar pointed to cities like Charlotte, Denver and Salt Lake City that are building or expanding their mass-transit systems. He said they will be able to draw more employers with good jobs and offer a better quality of life.

Millar's words echoed a warning last year from a top national business-relocation consultant who told the Metro Atlanta [Chamber of Commerce](#) that some employers were rejecting Atlanta as a potential place to bring jobs, because of traffic congestion.

Millar was in Atlanta on Thursday to address a "transportation summit" held by the Georgia Engineering Alliance at the Georgia World [Congress](#) Center. He said that so far the very recent declines in gas prices had not reversed the trend of people taking more mass transit.

As a young planner in 1972, Millar visited Atlanta, wanting to see for himself the place that was so ahead of the curve on transportation, he said in an interview. Atlanta had undertaken MARTA, he said, and was planning large stations at places that didn't seem immediately to call for them, but that later turned out to be big activity centers such as the CNN Center. Atlanta also "built one of the world's pre-eminent great highway networks," he said.

Since then, he noted, MARTA's expansion stopped, and Georgia is unusual in providing no significant sustained state funding for mass transit. He said he was hopeful that the region would turn that around. Activists are hoping for more transportation funding in the next legislative session.

Sprawl to meet its limit in Atlanta

Christopher B. Leinberger/From News Services/AJC/November 05, 2008

I have been coming to Atlanta for 35 years, consulting for the likes of Trammel Crow Residential, Cousins Properties and Carter and Associates, and I have witnessed one of the most remarkable metropolitan transformations in the country. Those changes led me to remark in a speech in the 1990s that metropolitan Atlanta was the fastest-growing human settlement in history regarding land consumption.

This phenomenal growth has been in all four cardinal directions but particularly to the north, up I-75, Ga. 400 and I-85. This northern thrust is in the heart of the "favored quarter," that 90-degree arc coming out from downtown that has been the focus of the vast majority of growth in Atlanta, just as it is in every metropolitan area in the country.

However, this development pattern is changing.

The underlying population and employment growth will continue — well above national rates. However, where that growth will locate is evolving.

We are witnessing the beginning of the end of sprawl. Like much of the rest of the country, the overproduction of automobile-driven suburban development at the fringe of the Atlanta

metropolitan area has reached its limits. The combination of outrageous commutes, environmental degradation and the increasing number of consumers preferring a “walkable urban” way of life have combined to start the end of the geometric increase in land consumption of the past half century.

The subprime crisis and the energy price spike of the past 18 months have just accelerated an underlying market trend.

Evidence of this structural change comes from many sources:

- > The city of Atlanta had been losing population since 1960 in spite of rapid metropolitan growth. That changed in the 1990s and has phenomenally accelerated this decade. The city is now among the top 10 fastest-growing cities in the country.

- > The city of Atlanta’s share of office market demand had been falling for at least a half century; it stabilized a couple of years ago. If you follow trends from other metro areas that are ahead of Atlanta, the office market share and the employment that comes with it should start gaining on the suburbs during the next upturn.

- > While the national housing depression has not affected metro Atlanta quite as badly as many other regions, it has followed national trends in one important respect: Homes in the center of the region and close to job centers have not suffered much, if any, price declines. Prices on the fringe are down twice the regional average, losing on average at least 14 percent of value. The highest-price housing on a per-square-foot basis is now in the city and close-in suburban job centers, a fundamental change from 20 years ago.

Metro Atlanta is following a national trend in creating and growing high-density, walkable urban places. The two-week party that was the Olympics in 1996 first showed you how exciting a temporary walkable urban place could be, and you set out to make it permanent over the subsequent decade.

But it definitely is not confined to downtown.

Midtown, Atlantic Station, Virginia-Highland, Buckhead, Vinings and Decatur have also emerged as walkable urban places. There will be many more.

The metro area that has the most walkable urban places, per capita, is the region surrounding Washington. It has 20 such urban communities today and 10 more are emerging; 20 years ago there were just two. Given that metro Atlanta has exactly the same population as metro Washington, if you follow the Washington model, you will be growing 15 to 25 more walkable urban places in the next decade. This represents tens of billions of dollars in investment over the next decade and will be home to thousands of jobs and housing.

But where will they be? Follow the MARTA rail and other planned rail lines, such as the Beltline. Ninety percent of Washington’s 30 current and emerging walkable urban places are served by rail transit.

However, these walkable urban places will not all locate in Atlanta. The experience in Washington and other metropolitan areas indicates that the majority of these places will be in the inner suburbs and job centers. Think of places such as Alpharetta, Doraville, Norcross and Smyrna.

There will be losers. Certain fringe, drivable-only suburbs will find themselves too far out and unaffordable to drive there and back for every trip from the house. The emerging demographic trends show that the vast majority of households created over the next 20 years will be singles and couples. Most of these households will eschew the Ozzie and Harriett houses on the fringe,

preferring the many options offered that are walkable or a close transit ride away from home. The end of the “drive until you qualify” housing will mean Atlanta needs a conscious strategy to provide work force and affordable housing.

Yet on balance, more walkable, urban centers in metro Atlanta will have many environmental, financial and social benefits. It may hurt certain households on the fringe, but its societal and family benefits far outweigh the costs. In any case, it is what the market is demanding.

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Getting There: Bus riding trend likely to stick

Mike Prager/Spokane review.com/November 3, 2008

Using mass transit is the single biggest thing the average person can do to slow global warming, a national leader in public transportation said in Spokane last week.



Riding the bus can reduce a person’s “carbon footprint” by two tons a year, said William Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association.

“That’s about 10 percent of the average household’s carbon production,” he told a group of Spokane transit officials.

That’s more of a carbon reduction than can be achieved by replacing conventional light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, weatherizing a home and getting a new energy-efficient refrigerator, he said.

In a two-adult household with two vehicles, getting rid of one of the two automobiles and using mass transit results in even larger gains while saving \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year in automobile-related expenses, Millar said.

In addition, using mass transit creates demand for U.S. products.

“The buses you buy are built in America. The people you hire come out of your job market,” Millar said.

Transit is expected to be an important element in future U.S. policy on energy and climate change, he said.

Congress is scheduled to rewrite the federal government’s six-year transportation funding bill starting next year.

Regardless of what happens Tuesday, it seems likely that the federal government will look more favorably at transit to reduce reliance on foreign oil and the increase in greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, which scientists say cause climate change.

In Spokane, transit ridership has increased steadily for the past three years. Through September, bus use is up by 19.5 percent over last year. Spokane Transit Authority officials said that the number of rides taken in October is expected to surpass the one million mark for the first time ever.

Ridership nationally increased by 5.2 percent in the first half of 2008, but in cities the size of Spokane and smaller, the use of transit has increased at a faster rate – nationally at 11 percent, Millar said.

Experience in recent years shows that once people switch to transit they often don't go back to their cars if the transit system meets their commuting needs, Millar said.

Under construction

Construction is nearly completed on a new Geiger spur rail crossing on state Highway 902 near Welcome Road. No traffic restrictions are in force there, but flaggers may be out.

Work on state Highway 20 east of Republic at the base of Sherman Pass is going to restrict traffic to one lane with flaggers on duty to control the single lane 24 hours a day. Expect delays of up to 20 minutes, state DOT officials said.

State Highway 291 is under construction to build shoulder turn lanes for a new fast-food restaurant at Swenson Road in Suncrest. Delays of up to five minutes are expected through much of this week.

In Spokane, Washington Street near Pacific Avenue will be reduced by two lanes until 10 p.m. today for a water utility installation.

Five Mile Road near Stratton Road will be reduced to one lane today from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. to repair a water line.

Aubrey L. White Parkway from Downriver Drive to the wastewater plant will be closed to traffic through Friday for work on a sewer outfall.

Southbound Nevada Street north of Hawthorne Road will be reduced by one lane this week as part of a landscaping installation for a new commercial development.

State Highway 902 near West Geiger Boulevard in Airway Heights will have lane closures while crews install a water main.

Mesa sees light rail as a turning point Many hope route will help deteriorating area

Chad Graham - Nov. 3, 2008 The Arizona Republic

With nearly 453,000 residents, Mesa counts a population larger than Miami, Minneapolis or St. Louis.

But the city has struggled to become more than a Phoenix bedroom community.

Mesa has attempted economic-development project after project to diversify its economy, which has good-paying aircraft-manufacturing jobs but also many low-paying telemarketing and retail jobs.

Metro light rail is seen as the latest way to change Mesa's fortune.

The city's initial stretch of the line is only a little more than a mile, but the impact could be among the most dramatic along the entire 20-mile route.

Neighborhoods, mom-and-pop shops and west Mesa, in particular, could be changed.

City officials, business leaders and development experts hope the train will bring a new identity to the city when it starts running down this stretch of Main Street.

Already, light rail has put new polish on Main Street: new paving, sidewalks and landscaping. Apartments, strip malls and businesses that were able to survive the construction are sprucing up before the trains start carrying passengers into the area.

Mesa plans a new free downtown circulator bus system that would work in tandem with light rail to expand and improve service.

The system would help light-rail riders access various downtown locations, including the Mesa Arts Center, Banner Health's office complex and Hohokam Stadium.

"Light rail is going to bring people into Mesa and let them see how great and unique west Mesa is," said Jo Ellen McNamara, executive director of the West Mesa Community Development Corp.

Neighborhoods

Mesa resident Jennifer Mott has seen late-night drug busts in her neighborhood, Pepper Place, which sits a few blocks from the light-rail line.

Doors are broken in. Police are yelling. People are running into the street.

That kind of chaos would immediately cause most people to think about moving elsewhere. But Mott, a stay-at-home mother and head of the Pepper Place Neighborhood Association, and her husband decided to stay.

They knew that the light rail was coming. It would bring a renewed interest in the area's 1950s ranch homes on roomy lots. It could increase property values.

"We've kind of banded together and tried to stick it out through the ups and downs, and we feel like this is a turning point for our neighborhood," Mott said.

She took a picture of the first train she saw zoom down Main Street during testing of the system.

There hasn't always been a high-level of enthusiasm for the light rail in Mesa. When the transportation system was proposed, many Mesa residents were against the project.

"I think a lot of the resistance was to spending money," Mott said, adding that "as soon as gas prices did what they did, it silenced the last of the critics."

She and her neighbors are excited to be able to take the light rail to sporting events and concerts in downtown Phoenix, shops on Mill Avenue in Tempe and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

The family's bet to stay put is starting to pay off.

"We were hoping that this neighborhood would turn from a meth zone into more of a yuppie zone," she said.

Mom-and-pop shops

Brothers Nathan and Jacob Johnson's great-grandmother was a shrewd businesswoman.

In the 1920s, Irene Watson went door to door in Mesa selling rosebushes and used the profit to buy a shop on Main Street. Watson's Flowers still occupies that building, which is near the second-to-last light-rail station.

Nathan, 27, and Jacob, 28 - the fourth generation - are getting ready to take over the family business.

"We've made it through the Great Depression, World War II and now the light-rail construction," Nathan Johnson joked.

His sense of humor has been important.

The construction started in October 2005 and dropped the shop's sales by 20 percent each year. Watson's opened another location in Gilbert, a decision that probably saved the entire company from going out of business.

Yet both brothers believe the light rail will be worth the headache. The neighborhood has been spiffed up. Transients that once roamed the street have largely moved on. Run-down motels and other businesses have been torn down.

"We have talked to merchants in other cities who got light rails in front of their stores just like ours and all of them said the construction was difficult but afterward it was the most wonderful thing they ever had happen to them," Nathan Johnson said.

West Mesa's future

What could the neighborhoods of the light-rail line in west Mesa look like in a decade?

William Jabjiniak, the city's economic development director, doesn't see the standard apartment complexes and strip malls that dominate the Valley's suburbs.

He sees a modern take on the urban, walkable neighborhoods that dominate East Coast cities. It could be an affordable area for young professionals and students who go to school in or work in Tempe or Phoenix.

"As development increases on the rail line, we're looking to change toward higher density and a bigger diversity of uses," he said.

That means having multistory buildings that combine shops, stores, condominiums and apartments. Such a dramatically new way of living is an educational process for everyone, he said.

"Is it going to take a little cajoling and hand-holding? Yes," he said. "Do we think the development community is smart enough to seize the opportunity? Absolutely."

Passenger Trains Gain Favor with US Public

Associated Press WorldStream via NewsEdge Corp.

WASHINGTON—After half a century as more of a curiosity than a convenience, passenger trains are getting back on track in some parts of the U.S.

The high cost of energy, coupled with congestion on highways and at airports, is drawing travelers back to trains not only for commuting but also for travel between cities as much as 500 miles apart.

Californians are considering selling billions of dollars worth of bonds to get going on an 800-mile (1,290-kilometer) system of bullet trains that could zip along at 200 miles (320 kilometers) per hour, linking San Francisco and San Diego and the cities in between.

In the Midwest, transportation officials are pushing a plan to connect cities in nine states in a hub-and-spoke system centered in Chicago.

The public is way ahead of policymakers in recognizing trains as an attractive alternative to cars and planes, said Rep. James Oberstar, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"I think we're at a transformational point in intercity passenger rail service," said Oberstar, a [Democrat](#).

Amtrak, the passenger rail service that struggled for years to attract riders, drew a record 28.7 million in the year ending Sept. 30. That is 11 percent more than the year before and the sixth straight year that ridership has increased. Ticket revenue hit a record \$1.7 billion, a \$200 million increase from a year earlier.

Rail travel is gaining greater favor in [Congress](#), which provides the subsidies needed to keep Amtrak rolling. Lawmakers are trying to find ways to deal with high energy prices, congested and aging roads and bridges, and an air traffic control system that relies largely on World War II-era technology.

Congress passed legislation this month that sets a goal of providing \$13 billion over five years to Amtrak; it is a major vote of confidence for the railroad. The measure also encourages development of high-speed rail corridors and contains \$2 billion in grants to states to enhance or introduce new service between cities. The money still must be appropriated.

President George W. Bush, an Amtrak critic who has opposed anything more than minimal money for the rail service over the past eight years, signed the bill Oct. 16.

With the economy in crisis and [credit](#) tightening, rail supporters acknowledge there is uncertainty in securing all the money, especially when competing with highway and aviation lobbies for any additional transportation dollars.

Congress has "a lot of mouths to feed on the transportation side," said Joe McHugh, Amtrak's vice president for government affairs.

Unlike Europeans, whose cities are connected by passenger rail networks, relatively few Americans travel by rail except in the popular corridor from Washington to Boston, in parts of California, and routes extending from Chicago. Outside the Northeast, ticket fares usually do not cover direct operating costs.

Critics say it is unfair to require people in areas where there is no Amtrak service or infrequent service to subsidize the train travel of people in the few corridors where there is frequent, fast service.

I do not think you can justify many, perhaps most, of the routes Amtrak is running," Sen. Jeff Sessions, a [Republican](#), said during Senate debate last month. "Fundamentally, the romantic view that we are going to have some sort of major international rail system does not seem to be realistic."

Still, some states are pushing for more and better passenger train service. In California, voters will decide Tuesday whether to launch the most ambitious rail project undertaken by any state. The ballot measure would authorize nearly \$10 billion in bonds to pay for planning and construction.

Proponents say a high-speed rail system could help reduce congestion at California airports, lessen dependence on foreign oil and decrease greenhouse gases. Critics say the state could be forced to raise [taxes](#) to pay off the bonds, and the money would be better invested in urban transit systems and highway construction.

Public Transit Moves County Forward

By Carol Fricke, Lina Teeter, Rob Heasley and Daniel P.I McGlinn /Kalamazoo Gazette (Mich.)/11/3/08

Public transportation in Kalamazoo County will take a giant step forward on Jan. 1 when all of the transit services will merge into one system operated by the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority.

This venture has been several years in the making, initiated originally by the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study, the metropolitan planning organization that is required by federal legislation to provide coordinated transportation planning for urban populations less than 200,000.

Since the 2006 proposal passed, the nine-member volunteer board has been working feverishly to accomplish the long list of tasks necessary to transition Kalamazoo Metro Transit fixed route and para-transit service, Care-A-Van and the Community Service fleet into one operation. Adding to the complexity of the task list is redirection of federal and state capital and operating funds from the city of Kalamazoo to the new authority.

This process has been a labor of love fueled by the conviction that public transportation is a crucial element in the economic growth and vitality of our county.

Public transportation is a powerful economic development tool, an attractive alternative to fluctuating [fuel prices](#) and a positive contributor to the health of our environment.

We urge your support of the countywide transportation millage request on the back of your ballot on Nov. 4.

Carol Fricke is chair of the Transit Authority Board. **Linda Teeter** is chair of the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority. **Rob Heasley** is mayor of Parchment and **Daniel P. McGlinn** is a local attorney and former member of the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners.

Public Transportation Projects Will Create Thousands of Jobs

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) called on [Congress](#) today to pass economic stimulus legislation that includes funding public transportation projects to create new jobs. APTA has identified 559 public transit “ready-to-go” projects, worth \$8 billion.

Testifying before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, APTA Chair Dr. Beverly Scott, who is also general manager and CEO of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), said that APTA has just completed a new survey which identified more than \$8 billion in “ready-to-go” projects from 170 public transit systems that could start within 90 days of federal funding being made available.

Pointing out that every \$1 communities invest in public transportation generates approximately \$6 in economic returns, Scott said, “I urge Congress to move forward with an economic stimulus package that recognizes the value of investing in our nation’s public transportation infrastructure. These projects will create new economic activity and put thousands of people to work.”

Scott said the economic stimulus legislation is also needed to provide additional infrastructure to meet the rapidly growing demand for public transportation.

Public transportation use has grown by 32% since 1995, a figure that is more than double the growth rate of the population (13 percent) and up substantially over the growth rate for the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on our nation’s highways (24 percent). Last year 10.3 billion trips were taken on U.S. public transportation – the highest number of trips taken in 50 years. In the first quarter of 2008, transit ridership grew by 3.4% and in the second quarter of 2008, ridership grew by 5.2%.

“Expanding public transportation services and creating much needed American jobs now can both be accomplished through the passage of an economic stimulus package,” said APTA President William W. Millar. “Transportation studies show that \$1 billion of federal investment creates about 35,000 jobs.

“Beyond creating jobs, investing in public transit serves other important national goals,” said Millar. “Public transportation provides more affordable travel options for Americans and helps us meet our national goals of energy independence and reduction of carbon dioxide emissions to combat [climate change](#).”

To read the congressional written testimony submitted by APTA Chair Dr. Beverly Scott to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, go to http://www.apta.com/government_affairs/aptatest/

For more information on the critical role public transportation plays in helping the United States become energy independent, go to: http://www.apta.com/media/releases/080310_land_use.cfm

For more information on the how public transportation reduces carbon emissions, go to: http://www.apta.com/media/releases/080310_land_use.cfm

New RTD board will confront funding woes, service issues

By Kevin Flynn, Rocky Mountain News/October 29, 2008

Five of the eight seats on the Regional Transportation District board to be decided in next week's election are contested, with the other three seats held by incumbents who are unopposed. The *Rocky Mountain News* interviewed the candidates about their plans and policies ranging from FasTracks to everyday bus service. Here are their answers to three questions about RTD policy:

*** 1. What should be done to solve the FasTracks funding crisis?**

*** 2. With RTD facing budget cuts, what policies would you follow in deciding how bus or light-rail service should be reduced if necessary?**

*** 3. Should RTD have the authority to convey land and development rights from property it acquires by eminent domain or condemnation to private developers at FasTracks stations?**

DISTRICT A

Bill James

1. We should always consider all options. What I perceive the people saying is they want everything built on time and we should find more revenue. We could ask voters to extend the Invesco Field tax for FasTracks to ease the increase. But we should do whatever the people want.

2. RTD has cash-flow realities to deal with; the bottom line is what's cost-effective. At some meetings, riders have had justified complaints about the service and the board has responded with improvements that save some of the service cuts. You have to take each decision on its merits.

3. Yes, if it has the opportunity to permit development at stations without inhibiting its transportation mission, it would benefit RTD. Leave urban renewal off-site to the cities. Any commercial development on station property should be only incidental to RTD's transportation purpose.

Peter Lorenzen

1. Build what can be built by the 2017 deadline without raising taxes and finish the rest of it over time as RTD can pay for it. The public isn't interested in another tax increase, and with the economic slowdown, many can't afford things as they are now.

2. We have to find out when people need to be at work, when they get out and try to accommodate as many of them as possible. Poll people who actually ride the bus and work out the optimum arrangement so that people can ride the bus. I'd nag other directors to ride the bus to find out what it's like.

3. I don't like eminent domain, but in some cases it is unavoidable. RTD isn't taking property to give to developers; it's not a redevelopment agency. But I am not opposed to letting a developer build on unused air rights on RTD property.

John Maslanik

1. The board is doing the right thing in going out and getting people's opinions. Increasing the sales tax begs the question whether we should study other mechanisms such as a property tax that is more stable. Property values increase near transit stations.

2. RTD should stay close to its customers and hold meetings so people know certain routes are up for review. It should be sensitive to public outcries if there is needed service. We should see if there is room to improve route patterns and schedules to make them more efficient before reducing them.

3. Yes, as long as it follows the very strict procedures in the law for eminent domain. If a developer gets the air rights at a station, it shouldn't unfairly benefit at the expense of a private developer a block away. Some of that money should even go back somehow to the previous owner.

Laura Yribia

1. People want all of it built on schedule, so a sales tax increase is an option that should be decided by the people. We should also look at expanded use of public- private partnerships to build the lines as it shifts the risk of further cost increases to the private sector.
2. Public input is the most important aspect. Riders on some routes have been able to work with RTD to save their buses from cutbacks. Creative ways to look at more convenient schedules should be tried to boost ridership before we cut them.
3. First, RTD needs to purchase only the minimum land needed for transit. If there is property left over, we need to respect the people and business that were displaced with creative options such as giving them first choice at acquiring the rights.

DISTRICT F

Jerry Staples

1. One option is to build the three corridors that attract federal funding and one other of the remaining seven. That should be the complete I-225 corridor. It connects Nine Mile to the Airport corridor and it serves Fitzsimons, which will have 32,000-plus employees. I can't imagine any other corridor more important.
2. If you have a route that's running at 10 percent of capacity vs. another at 90 percent, it doesn't take a genius to see which should be cut and which one kept. One needs to be protected. I believe in scoring the routes and looking at how many passengers they carry. The common good comes above all.
3. If you're looking at it overall, RTD's only in one business and that's transportation. To use its eminent domain rights to get into the development business isn't right.

Tom Tobiassen

1. Build the three federally funded corridors and one more - the I-225 light-rail corridor. I would support asking for a tax increase, but it would be a nasty battle. Without it, the I-225 corridor is the only portion that makes sense, because of the Fitzsimons campus, rather than building small portions of all the others.
2. There must be a minimum threshold of riders to be served. If routes are underused, I would survey those areas to find out why before cutting it to try to increase ridership. Perhaps a call-n-Ride service could fill the gap for transit-dependent riders.
3. It's my understanding they have that right. But RTD should only acquire the land it needs to provide the service, but if it sells unused building rights to a developer for a mixed-use transit facility, I would try to invite the original landowners to be part of it. RTD should never turn over ownership to a developer.

Barbara Yamrick

1. As a current director, I am going to wait until the meeting in my district so I can hear what my constituents want. Bus rapid transit as a substitute for rail doesn't justify its costs; I think light rail is the answer. There were cost overruns at DIA, but in the end it works. That's how people will think of FasTracks.
2. The public needs to be proactive in the process. I have the minimum standards in front of me and if enough people are riding a route, we can provide the service and we get a good farebox return. We just have to find the money to provide the service.

3. One of the basic rights of Americans happens to be private property. I will vote against taking private property if it's not going to be for a public good. Anybody who is the original owner should always benefit.

DISTRICT G

Justin Herrera

1. Build the three lines that rely on federal funding and the I-225 line to connect to the airport line. Then, there has to be at least one line serving the north metro area and it has to maximize ridership. Consider a tax increase only if the economy improves.

2. We should look at reducing off-peak service first to cut costs and preserve as much rush-hour service as we can. Stepping up to four-car trains can help pick up the slack. Long term, integrate transit into land-use planning and zoning so more people live along transit corridors.

3. It's a real stretch of eminent domain power. If we have transit-oriented development on the station site there should be a way that the property owner is able to buy into the new development at a favored rate. It's time to have that conversation.

Jack O'Boyle

1. None of the current options RTD is examining is acceptable. A tax increase is premature; RTD must slim down before asking people for more money. I want to finish by 2017, but we're in tough times and everything should be on the table including re-examining bus rapid transit.

2. RTD needs to streamline its many different fare programs. They're giving some people free rides with Eco Pass while charging others the going rate. We can't afford to pay for more service. We need the tools to accurately count riders so we can tailor our service where it's needed.

3. Yes, eminent domain is a legitimate and well-regulated government power, and compensation is paid at fair market value. Once the transfer of ownership takes place, the former owner has no participation in the investment of someone else who develops it.

DISTRICT H

Kent Bagley

1. Things are changing rapidly in the world and RTD is right to go out to the public for input. We should do a reassessment and a strategic look at the metro area's major activity centers and what really needs to be served by FasTracks lines. Everybody can't have exactly what they wanted.

2. Cuts are sometimes made too quickly and there has to be better vetting of proposed reductions. We should examine the potential for increased ridership on poorly performing routes. We should also examine the broader impacts on other service of cutting some routes.

3. Yes, if there are development rights remaining after the transit use, that should be looked at. We should work with local governments to plan and rezone properties so that owners get the best compensation based on highest and best use of their property.

Arthur Miller

1. We should go to voters to ask for another time-limited tax increase and let them make the decision. Waiting to build it over time would have us completing a system in 2034 that was designed for 2017, at a cost of another \$2 billion, and tying up RTD's ability to do other projects in that time.

2. Current RTD policy of setting minimum standards for ridership numbers and cost are good, but we should add more public input and listen to their concerns. There may be ways to save money and still meet the needs of riders.

3. No, it comes back to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." You're in a position of great trust when you're dealing with other people's land. Is that really the right thing to do to maintain trust? No, the damage it does to public trust is too great a price to pay.

Joe Stengel

1. We need to scale it down and do it basically within the budget we have and finish what we can by the original 2017 date. I am against going back to voters because RTD made a promise and it has to honor it. The economy is marginal, but I think you need to honor your commitments as best you can.

2. We need to look first at cutting the routes that have very low ridership, although there may be ways to boost their ridership that should be examined. It's a tough decision, but the people using those services may have to accommodate a change if ridership is too low.

3. No, RTD is clearly pushing the envelope. It has the right of eminent domain only for a transit purpose. You can justify taking land from a guy for transit but you can't carve it up and sell it off for a profit. It doesn't pass the smell test.

DISTRICT M

Matt Cohen

1. I feel very strongly that building something other than the complete system is unacceptable. I am most interested in the option of going to voters to ask for another sales tax increase. Great cities have great transit. Let's be one of them.

2. I am sensitive to those who are transit dependent. We need to communicate with riders and residents on routes that could be cut to try to increase ridership. But if it doesn't improve, RTD has to look at operation efficiencies on low-ridership routes.

3. Yes, but we really need to be careful that the private development enhances the property from a transit perspective. We have to consider mixed-use benefits and how to maximize limited resources we have.

Ramey Johnson

1. Everything should be on the table, including public-private partnerships. But we should ask voters if they want to increase funding. I have absolutely no confidence in the current estimate. I want RTD to keep its word and I want FasTracks done honestly, honorably and equitably.

2. Cuts have to be equitable among all the routes that are low in ridership. You have to have an objective measurement. Sometimes during the middle of the day light-rail trains are empty. We should consider cutting back service at times of low demand.

3. No, I don't think they should. RTD stands for Regional Transportation District, not Regional Economic Development Authority. That's for cities and counties to deal with. If it happens we should find a way to get profits to the people who lose their land.